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In Theosophy the view which is taken with regard to almost everything that is studied is the evolutionary view, but evolution from its standpoint is something far more inclusive and significant than what is called evolution by modern Science. It includes matter, life in every form, consciousness or intellect, and what we call the Spirit. According to Occultism, even matter evolves. Consider any substance, the earth, the various chemical elements, the atom and even the constitution of the atom—all are evolving. If the very texture of matter and its properties are changing, if there is a living fire, an energy, deep within its bowels transforming it into a medium of sensitiveness and expression that at present we cannot imagine, then here is a fact which changes for us the very basis of things. Evolution means change, and change implies fluidity, and such fluidity, plasticity and flow are characteristic of life. The very nature of life is to evolve, expand, move out in ever new directions, unfold various hidden potentialities which, so far as we can judge, is an inexhaustible store. H.P.B. speaks of motion as " the abstract Deity," absolute at the highest point, mechanical at lower levels. It is the primary fact about everything in manifestation. It is motion not in the sense of a movement from one point in space to another, but in the sense of a constant process of change and advancement. Among

modern philosophers, Bergson was an eloquent exponent of the view that life is a constant movement through matter and form.

We may talk of the evolution of matter, but we have to remember that there is life in matter of every grade and sort; there is no speck of matter devoid of life, though life there exists in a deeply involved and heavily veiled condition. This truth has been put in the words that "Life sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the plant, is beginning to be awake in the animal, and it is fully awake and aware of itself in man". The view that life is everywhere, everything is in motion, and nothing is dead, inert or static, is supported by the fact revealed to us by Science—also revealed by Occultism in other terms—that the atom is really a system of balanced forces, electrical in nature, and holding enormous quantities of power. This view did not obtain in H.P.B.'s time. How strange that the earth, which looks so peaceful normally, permitting use in so many ways, consists of particles each of which conceals tremendous forces which can annihilate huge populations, lay low vast edifices of matter.

In fact, the action of life is electrical at all its levels. We, whatever the word "we" might mean, are living in an ocean of electricity. This view, which was actually propounded by H.P.B., would have been scouted in the last century as nonsense, as just a fancy. Now we can understand that nothing is inert, except seemingly. At least one cannot deny that there can be some sort of evolution in matter of various grades, as well as in the various forms we call living.

Along with life there is consciousness. It is a question to be carefully considered, whether there is such a thing as life apart from consciousness. We say there is life in a particular form or in a little cell, because it is sensitive, it gives some sort of a response, it is capable of action. If there is sensitiveness, the possibility of a response to an impact, that

is of the essence of consciousness. This is in accordance with the ancient view, that in the beginning was Mind, and the movement of whatever existed was the beginning of life. When we think of life in a particular form, of a certain species, it is really a continuous and co-ordinated flow, at each moment a state of sensitivity and action, every individualized life a stream of action either conscious or with intelligence innate in it. If there is a connection between mind and matter as indicated in this view, then, corresponding to whatever the mind may achieve, there must be possibilities answering them in matter.

In *A Study in Consciousness*, Dr. Annie Besant speaks of the identity between life and consciousness; she says that when life is turned outwards towards the multiplicity it is consciousness; when consciousness is turned inwards towards the unity it is life. The motion outwards, the action on what is external, is a movement of life that carries consciousness within itself, but only when this movement is brought to a stop, then there arises by a reflection of the rays of consciousness, as it were, from the point of stoppage a consciousness separated from life. In the earlier stages of the plant and animal kingdoms, consciousness does not function separately from life; things move by instinct. The plant and the animal live their lives, and that living comprises various forms of action which are intelligent, but not consciously so.

A bird is conscious, but does not have the type of consciousness that is in ourselves. Its intelligence is one with the movements which make up its life. But in the human stage consciousness or mind becomes separate from action. I have a mind which can examine the life-process in things, forms judgments on all things within its purview and can also fly off the ground, indulge in various imaginations or fantasies. It is further a mind that can understand itself. This means that, instead of consciousness being held within the limitations of

a certain form, locked up in it, it externalizes itself, and from that vantage point it looks upon and studies the movements of life and even gets the very feel of those movements. The freedom thus gained by the mind gives rise to various capacities which do not show themselves when it is wrapped up in life, which in Nature follows a limited, precise course. I can imagine all kinds of things which do not happen, can invent various terms bracketing a variety of ideas, suggest different relationships between things, speak in various ways; evidently my consciousness has extended enormously beyond those processes of life within which it was confined before the human stage was reached. This externalization of consciousness, its ability to detach itself, to look upon its own movements by, as it were, bending back on itself gives rise to consciousness of self. In the animal or bird there is only consciousness; the animal is conscious of the object it confronts. It may or may not see colors, but it sees the world external to itself. But it is not able to turn its consciousness upon itself and look into itself; it lacks self-consciousness, which is the birth-mark of humanity.

This separation between consciousness and life gives rise to disharmony. What is thought is one thing, what obtains is another; but this disharmony does not go on for ever. Eventually there is a union between what is and what we think, when thought subsides into pure awareness dissolving its many illusions. The consciousness, retaining its powers of thought, is able to free itself from its reactions and act from within intuitively. Then instead of the instinct of the earlier stages, there comes into being an inner or spiritual intuition, and the consciousness becomes again one with life and Truth.

What we call consciousness is really a link between Spirit and matter; it arises out of that condition of polarity. At first it develops in connection with matter, as it is turned towards

external, material things; it works on the basis of the differences which exist in the field of matter. So long as it is attracted to matter, is under the stress of its gravity, drawn towards the field of differences, the Spirit is left out of action and is therefore asleep or inactive. But later this consciousness or mind frees itself to some extent from the pull of matter, and becomes a medium for the action of the Spirit. Instead of being self-willed and positive, acting partially, it becomes beautifully negative. The Spirit is able to use that consciousness or mind for the expression of its nature, for the implementation of its purpose.

When we say "Spirit" it is not an entity having a certain form at the other end of things; the Spirit is formless and unconditioned; therefore we cannot really imagine it. What we term Spirit is manifested only in the nature of that Spirit, which we can know to some extent. There is a certain nature, a mode of action, certain qualities, which reflect the Spirit, and the Spirit exists for us only in that reflection. Nobody can see God except in the form of some action, some type of beauty or some intelligence.

If we regard life as flowing from one pole to the other, it flows down not all at once but in a series of outpourings. There is a certain state or reality which we call the Spirit, and then there is an outflow of action of three different sorts from that state of being, corresponding respectively to matter, consciousness and what flowers out of this consciousness, and these are called the Three Outpourings. The second and the third of these blend with each other, the second constituting the soul of each thing into which it enters, and the soul becoming a vesture for the Spirit which manifests itself through the third. All these three streams may be regarded as expressing three aspects of the Deity, which together make a Unity. The outpourings may be three but the Source or Origin is one, and each prepares the field or acts as a vesture

for the next. There is a preparation of the field which is matter in its original state, before there is the breathing of life into it, producing the various living forms; and then there is the stream which constitutes man who can consciously rise above every form which he uses. The first outpouring comes from the aspect of the Universal Mind, *Mahat*, as it is called in Samskrit; it saturates the previous root-matter, the potentially objective field, with its own nature; the second from an aspect which corresponds to Buddhi or the sensitive spiritual soul in man; the third from the highest aspect, the reproduction of which in man is the Ātman, a word that has an unimaginable meaning. The process of evolution is carried on through these outpourings, which come from a lofty Source and seem to flow on endlessly, interblended.

All evolution being fundamentally the evolution of life, even the evolution of matter and all material substances is in reality the evolution of life. But when we speak of human evolution, it is mainly the evolution of that aspect of his nature which is termed Manas. There is a process of evolution in man similar to that in animals and in plants; but it is the evolution of Manas which is characteristic of the human stage. When we approach what we call the superhuman state, it is the evolution of Manas in its superlative aspect, namely Manas irradiated with Buddhi. We have not come to the apex of the evolution of the mind; it has to go on even in the superhuman stage but there it is the evolution of Manas along with Buddhi, which is the spiritual soul or the spiritual intuition. At a still higher stage it becomes the evolution of Manas plus Buddhi plus Ātma. Of course these are terms and distinctions to be thought over and understood for oneself.

The unfoldment of these higher aspects, of the spiritual nature, lifts one to the realm of unity. When the buddhic consciousness begins to be active in an individual, he feels a sense of unity with all other lives, with all other things. This

unity is very real, not something just imagined. The experience of the unity is the rightest—if I may use a Carlylean form of speech—experience which it is possible for one to have. The consciousness of all of us consists of so many movements; it has various emotions; it forms and is made up of so many different images. The consciousness, as it is basically, is modified in all these ways. The basic consciousness is like water in a lake, calm and smooth, but the water does not always remain in that state. It is all the time being thrown up into waves of various configurations, by all kinds of agitations and activity, and these are the modifications of mind or consciousness, constantly changing. The modifications in you are different from the modifications in me. But suppose we go under the modifications to the calm, smooth surface; that state of consciousness is the same in all, the same all the time under the superficial changes. This is a truth which can be experienced for oneself, and it is experienced in the state of yoga, which Patanjali calls " the cessation of the modifications of the mind," which it is on its negative side.

The mind is active, it throws up various images, moves from one condition to another, and this is taking place all the time. Is it possible to bring these modifications to an end, so that the mind is in a state of perfect stillness, like the calm waters of a lake enclosed by mountains and therefore not exposed to the winds? It *is* possible, and when there is that serenity under all circumstances, one is established in yoga. When the mind is like a calm lake, it merely reflects the things that are around it; it is aware of them without being disturbed. Assume that I am in a state of yoga—it is only an assumption—am I aware that there are these walls, the roof, the benches, the people in this room, and what they are doing? Yes, but it is an awareness which causes no disturbance in me. I am aware in the same way in which a mirror reflects the things in front of it. I may be aware even

of the thoughts and feelings of the people; even then the mind can be just a mirror. Mere awareness causes no disturbance; there is no distortion of the mind because of what it mirrors. But when it reacts and creates images out of the reactions, these may produce distortions of the mirror, the field of consciousness, which then is thrown out of shape. The mind is no longer in that condition in which it originally was or in a form in harmony with that condition; it has assumed a different configuration.

If consciousness in everyone is basically of the same nature, then we may say it is just one substance; that which is of the same nature is the same substance, even if a portion is in India and the rest in Australia, at the South Pole or anywhere else. The life which informs that substance is the same type of life; it is the same monadic essence which makes the gold, howsoever it may be distributed in quantity. In this way one can come to the realization that all consciousness is fundamentally one and the same. But it is not enough merely to say so, taking it as a truth from somebody else; one has to try to prove in oneself the truth of that statement.

From the truth that consciousness is of the same nature in all we easily come to the truth that life is the same in all, in essence it is one. Unity of consciousness means unity of life.

In biology they speak of the tree of life. They regard life as having originated from a certain substance or cell which somehow came into existence in the past. By various successive modifications of it in all possible ways it has given rise to the living forms we know. We can trace on paper a tree of life which has its roots in the far-away past, but has gradually spread and branched out through the ages that have passed. But there is another tree of life in which the root exists here and now, but deep down in the nature of things, and from that root the tree springs up, and

we find its branches and branchlets everywhere; they make up the whole map of life as it is spread out before us. All the living things—what is not living?—are metaphorically either cells or leaves of that tree, the species being the branchlets, the families the branches, and so on. That is the real picture when we look at them all from the heart of things, a picture of inter-connectedness, of unity in diversity. It is all one Life, assuming innumerable forms, different from one another in every possible manner.

There is unity of life, and there is also unity of Spirit. If life is consciousness, the Spirit is that which embodies itself in the consciousness. There is the one Spirit in all, there is also matter everywhere, and there is a certain relationship between Spirit and matter, which varies from level to level and from one thing to another. The Spirit being universal, the basic Being, must be connected with everything that exists. The connection between it, that is, the spiritual pole and the material form may be imagined as an ethereal filament, a living thread, of the nature of electricity, differing from plane to plane. But in man it is not merely a filament; the one Spirit establishes itself in an outpost, as a brilliant spark or star.

From the deepest or highest standpoint, what takes place —we might say the end of the whole process—is an unfoldment of what we call the Spirit, the objectification of all that is contained in it, the making manifest of a nature that is hidden. But this unfoldment has to take place through suitable forms, which do not exist from the beginning but have to be evolved by stages the relativity of which, considered in the aspect of time, strikes us as varying lengths of time. The form has to evolve, and there is the unfoldment of the Spirit through the processes of life and consciousness, the evolution of form matching that unfoldment. The "form" is not only the physical form, but all other aspects of form, form of every sort.

Life is a certain Divine action, which flows through form, and flowing, brings its faculties to birth and then to bud and blossom. The flow of life is expressed in the faculties that are active, but there is an energy behind the flow, more than energy, an intelligence, a quality which presses upon the form and raises those faculties from grade to grade and elaborates them. It creates the means for further faculties. This is evolution. There is no life that we can perceive apart from the play of these faculties. There is expression, and there is also the building up of forces which enhance that expression.

Whither does this process lead? Being an improvement all the time, it moves towards a form perfectly adapted for the expression of every stored-up capacity, to express the fullness of whatever is the basis of it all. From one life-period to another it is a form more perfect for its purpose. It is the perfect form which is present in the Divine Mind and is the model towards which evolution moves. At the back of every form in Nature there is a model, manifest at the end but present from the beginning, a prototype which hovers over the form invisibly, connected with it by invisible threads, and all the life energies run, presumably guided by or through those threads, in such a way as to make the form approximate to that model.

This idea of Life pressing upon form, modifying it, improving it, bringing it into a state of better and finer organization is completely different from the idea of life as a product of matter. People unconsciously cling to this latter idea even now, though it does not hold the field as it did in the last century. It is Ludwig Büchner who said then that brain secretes thought as liver secretes bile. The idea was that life was a kind of irritated patch on matter, like a skin affliction which when scratched is able to enlarge its boundaries.

There is unity at the origin. But that unity or point is also the end of the whole process. All the energies which are

involved are evolved and finally summed up into a perfect whole and concentrated at the original point. These energies spring out of the original condition of unity in which they must have been beautifully interlocked and integrated. They must have existed there in a state of harmony like the notes of a perfect chord; so when the energies flow out separately they are in such mutual affinities as to be capable of perfect co-ordination, and life to all appearance is a flow of co-ordinated energies. In any living form there are streams of energy moving in different directions at different levels; there is constant change and a flow of action—chemical, electrical, and so on—but all perfectly integrated. When the energies are balanced and make a whole as in an atom or a cell, they constitute an individuality giving an impression of sameness, and apparently assume or develop the objectivity which characterizes matter. As they flow without any real break in an uninterrupted stream —death is but a change from level to level—there is the continuity of life and evolution.

Life consists of diverse movements, but all in perfect concert, and this harmony of movement is unbroken, up to a certain point, though afterwards when the stream breaks into different, especially conscious individualities, it becomes frayed and broken. There are all kinds of movements taking place in Nature, which seem to conflict with one another, but they make a total balance. But humanity has yet to achieve such wholeness. Eventually, and this is also part of the whole process, the original unity is restored, but with the difference that what was implicit in the beginning—as beauty, faculty, intelligence and so forth—is brought out at the end.

Everything is moving towards a perfection of organization both in the individualities and in the whole which they constitute. What can be more perfect than the human body even as it is? Seeing the trend we can foresee the future. The future is a projection of the present, because the present holds

it in germ. Nothing can emerge at the end which was not also at the beginning, in some manner. If it is a movement towards harmony, the harmony that is attained at the end must have been present in some manner, however absolute, at the beginning. The truth of the separation of individualities and their ultimate coalescence is put in a simple form when we say: The One becomes the many, and the many rebecome the One.

We see the many as they appear on the surface; they constitute the circumference of life. Each individual life is different from every other; yet the many are really one. There is an essential unity which is in the centre of that circumference. The radii which connect the points on the circumference with the centre, varying in direction from one to another, make the differences, and in the difference is the individuality. Nothing in Nature is quite the same as another. Scientists are beginning to suspect that even one cell of a group may be different from another. Each life, great or small, is a unique manifestation of the one manifesting Principle. The uniqueness which is concealed in the beginning, as a seed in the soil, is gradually brought out and stands out superbly in the end.

All this may seem theoretical, ideas invented by imaginative minds and hopeful hearts; we all want to believe in something very satisfying. But it *may* be the truth of what takes place. I say it " may be," in order not to be dogmatic. If we admit the possibility that this can be the case, we may presently know the truth of the matter. We all instinctively seek harmony in the depths of our nature. This too must have a deep significance. May it not mean that in Nature, in evolution, there is a search for and a movement towards harmony? If there is this movement, we have to take it into account, along with all the discords we experience.

Perhaps there is a basis of harmony somewhere, which attracts the spirit or the intelligence that makes itself sensitive to it. This sensitiveness does not arise out of mere wishful thinking. It is when one is absolutely impersonal, detached, not seeking anything, that one experiences in himself the condition of peace which is the highest form of harmony.

Imagine a perfect flower, something most beautiful. At the base is the central point where it is one with the uprising stem, and this point, where the flower is connected with the stem, may be regarded as the origin of its being, metaphorically speaking. Then there is the calyx and the petals, which seem to embody the up-welling streams of energy, a fountain, which is the invisible basis for that flower. The fountain plays from moment to moment, forming the shape of the flower. The energies which well up are in a certain pattern, different from flower to flower; the lotus is different from the rose, the rose from some other flower. The pattern makes the individuality of the flower, and the flow of energies in that pattern is really the flow of life; but the pattern is being modified, extended, deepened, simplified and made beautiful all the time, so that the rose or the lotus of today will not be the rose or lotus of ten thousand years hence. The modification of the pattern is evolution objectively viewed.

All through this process, which goes on for ages, the aim, conscious or unconscious, in one aspect of it is to bring out a certain beauty. We presume a certain Intelligence at the back of it, which is capable of projecting the end at the very beginning, and that projection, which unites the beginning with the end, is the aim or the purpose of all that takes place. The beauty is also beauty of movement; and when we come to the stage of man, it is beauty of heart, mind and Spirit more than of mere external form. The manifoldness latent in the beginning is made patent at the end.

It seems a long-drawn-out process. If we think of it in terms of time in our present state of consciousness we are struck with a sense of weariness. But we need not think of it so. If I think of myself as having to pass step by step, through various experiences in this life and in future lives, it would seem to me a wearisome process. It is a mercy that we can think only of the years we have passed in this particular life. There is no weariness in childhood, because then we do not see things through the barrier of years nor do we anticipate much. If we can live in the present without the shadow of the past, we might remain young in spite of our years.

There is this extraordinary provision in Nature, that periodically the past is cancelled by that phenomenon which we so deplore and dislike—the death of the body and of the memories that appertain to it. Without death everything would go on and on, become more and more decayed. But because periodically the form is completely gone along with the memories, the past does not exist for us and there is only the present. To think that this is a vast, tiresome process, with a reward at the end to make up for all that we undergo, is thinking based on ignorance. Every moment is new, taken by itself, and that is the case with Those who are in the Eternal even amidst time. They look at everything from an ever-fresh standpoint. Each phenomenon has charm, novelty and freshness when we come across it for the very first time. To penetrate its meaning, we must retain that freshness. Because we become accustomed to things, they are stale. Fortunately we do not remember the endless past. Perhaps we can drop even some of the things that belong to this particular life and thus enter upon a new era in our individual lives here and now.